

PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

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The Philosophy of the Self From the Pathologos to the Logos to Enlightenment Experiences

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Abstract

The movement from the pathologos to the logos and to enlightenment experiences proceeds along a well-defined route composed of a series of probing questions that uncover unsuspected false beliefs about the Self, and create the conditions for profound experiences akin to enlightenment experiences. Since these questions follow the model of Philosophical Midwifery it can be called a dialectic. The questions are adapted to meet the needs of the individual in uncovering, understanding and eliminating personal problems. It fulfills the demands of the dialectic in being a method for providing definitions, demonstrations, divisions, and analysis in the quest for understanding the Self.

Keywords: *Self, Philosophical Midwifery, the logos, dialectic, personal problems, and enlightenment*

The philosophy of the Self continues in the Platonic tradition since its goal is to *Know Thyself*, with its highest vision to be the Self rather than the One or the Good. Its methods follow the art of philosophical midwifery¹, which is a mode of philosophical counseling that has been designed for eliminating unsuspected false beliefs of the Self through exploring personal problems and the analysis of dreams.

Philosophical midwifery, being a mode of counseling, is designed to uncover the unsuspected false beliefs of the Self that block one from attaining one's most meaningful goals. The method of exploration of philosophical midwifery follows a systematic sequence of steps that culminate in an insight into the roots of personal unsuspected problems and opens one to more profound states of mind. It offers the opportunity to decide whether or not to step away from the bonds that formerly held us captive, and live without the false beliefs about the Self that had enslaved us. When these unsuspected beliefs are left unchallenged we live as prisoners trapped in the cave of false beliefs about the Self. The goal of the philosophy of the Self is to achieve and understand a pure state of Self unhindered by false beliefs of the Self.

To better understand the scope and methods of philosophical midwifery three questions need to be answered:

- (1) What is the most profound and meaningful goal that is accessible when guided through this mode of exploration that is called philosophical midwifery?
- (2) What is the furthestmost reach of this paradigm of understanding?
- (3) Can that pure state of the Self entail profound experiences akin to enlightenment experiences?

Let us begin the first question with a reflection. It is accepted among many readers of ancient philosophy that the most profound goal is the Good and the One. The reasoning that supports this

claim is twofold: all seek the good, and whatever is must be a one. These twin ideas are called the highest of goal. These twin ideas—the Good and the One—have their roots in different human experiences, so they are aspects of something else that is above both of them. However, since these two ideas make different points, they are different aspects of something, so if that something is one it cannot be these two parts, or different aspects of something, or a unity of two parts, since a pure One must be without a twoness or of parts. Thus, they cannot both be considered as the highest term in philosophy; they must make room for something else as the necessary highest object of all reflection.

This reflection that something else is needed is the idea of the Self. The source of this claim that the Self is the ultimate term owes its origin and systematic development to Plato's *Parmenides*. It is within this dialogue that Plato explicates this idea of the Self as ineffable and defends its place in philosophy.²

For, when Parmenides was asked to provide an example of his dialectic he supplies his own personal hypothesis, the One-Self; it is described as akin to the One with only negatives, but it moves beyond the One because the Self is the most fundamental or ultimate foundation. The description of the One-Self is not a separate experience, and it can be likened to Atman in Hinduism, and Nirguna Brahman, or Emptiness, in Buddhism. The most profound experience is described as the most brilliant light of Being, or divine luminosity, or mind turning about to know itself, and it is called the glory, or appearance of God—or *doxa*—mentioned in the transfiguration of Jesus.³

These two profound states are the spiritual goals of many people, and many devote themselves to a variety of spiritual disciplines and meditations to reach these goals. However, what is most interesting is that these profound states have been experienced by those who have participated in the Noetic Society's explorations of dreams.⁴ Nearly all of those who experienced these profound states in their dreams had entirely forgotten these profound experiences, and yet they were recalled and relived through the dream analysis.

These dreamers of the profound experiences were startled to discover they had forgotten these episodes as they were guided by questions that allowed them to recall the experiences. Then, in their recollection of the dream they re-experienced the original experience, and while it may not have been fully re-experienced the episode did contain the dramatic seeing of that experience.⁵

However, like all experiences that are not continually reflected upon, they lose their power and vividness, and play a diminished role in the future of the dreamer. Behind this forgetfulness, we know there are many beliefs that play a role in diminishing the perceived importance of any profound experience. These beliefs are activated after any meaningful experience, and they can be called a counter-attack. The idea of the counter-attack is recognized as a key term in philosophical midwifery because after gaining an insight into one's personal problems it is inevitable that it is met by the diminishing power of these counter-attacks. The particular form of these counter-attacks varies with each family's teaching because the family-clan always urges members to consider nothing higher than its own goals and values. These urgings surface after meaningful experiences and are called examples of the pathologos, and their origin can always be traced to early youthful learning experiences. Inherent within these counter-attacks is a drive to return to the former clan values, and most central to them is always a false belief of the nature of the Self.

These counter-attacks follow naturally after any kind of profound experience, and the experience then becomes a faint memory, having little effect upon one's life. Guides or teachers in many spiritual systems urge their followers to continue their spiritual practice after such experiences. It is in this way that the experiences are both preserved and cultivated.

The power of the pathologos became more apparent when one person explored their dream and discovered that in the dream they entered into a pure state of the Self. This person described the state in terms of being empty, free of images of any kind, and void of all else. However, they experienced a sense of frustration that the experience did not conform to what they wanted to experience. As the dreamer said, "It is not knowledge, or anything at all." Clearly, the dreamer had an expectation of what knowledge is, and since the experience did not include the expectation, such an experience was rejected. We need to make clear that to have a false idea of what is real, in Plato's *Republic*, is something that both gods and man abhor above all else.⁶ Our dreamer's thinking did not have room for the highest idea of the Self and so he had an unsuspected false belief of the Self, the pathologos at work. We have here an example of the power of the pathologos; it can undermine the most powerful and meaningful experience, and, yet, the logos can overcome that very pathologos.

Is the pathologos one or many? There are as many pathologos as there are false beliefs about the nature of the Self. Each pathologos has its unique premise and the behavior that follows from that premise is entirely rational, but not true. Thus, each pathologos expresses a complex rational system that lacks truth. It was the dialectical methods of philosophical midwifery that brought understanding to a very significant and important dream and broke through the forgetfulness of profound experiences so that it could be understood and re-experienced. The power of this rational approach to dreams therefore exhibits the role of the logos.

We are now at a point when we can discuss the second of our questions. The Logos is the intellectual expression of the paradigm, and it unfolds providentially through all levels of reality.⁷ It is all-embracing and as a method of exploration it follows an inherent order that is the dialectic.

The dialectic in Plato's *Parmenides* is an ordering principle that proceeds through four positive hypothetical hierarchical levels, followed by the denial of each corresponding level.⁸ These counter arguments are designed to show not merely the denial of each level, but to show that the absence of the positive shows the necessity for the positive. In explorations of these different levels questions proceed from each premise while employing the same terms, or ideas, repeatedly. The strict use of questions that follows a rigorous method of exploration qualifies as a dialectic. When Parmenides urges Socrates to learn this method, he urges him to follow the logos of Zeno.⁹ Parmenides details the major terms, or ideas, that function within each of the hypotheses, such as likeness, same, different, etc., but in this dialogue Plato does not give examples of such a dialectical analysis of these very ideas. In Proclus' *Commentary* on Plato's *Parmenides* he discusses each of these ideas dialectically and goes on to add providence and the soul.¹⁰

The idea of the logos that exhibits itself in philosophical midwifery talks has been described as a logos because it follows a strict pattern of questions designed to reveal unsuspected beliefs that have blocked one from the realization of one's goals.

The divine luminosity is also called mind itself, and it is through the Logos that its intelligibility is made manifest. Human intellectual systems are a shadow of this logos. It can also be said to be the second hypothesis of *The Parmenides*. The first hypothesis expresses the pure idea of the Self as One-Self. It is by transferring the set of negatives that identify the One to the Self that creates the bridge to the idea of the One-Self. The third hypothesis shows the logos of the self that is functioning between successive moments and as being the source of all change. The fourth is the source of collective belief as its parallel opposite, the eighth, accounts for the paradoxes of the empirical method, while the sixth is the foundation for the pathologos.

We can conclude with Plato's position that to have a false idea of reality is something that all gods and men abhor beyond all else.¹¹ We can add that it is through our best efforts in our philosophy that we can discover unsuspected false beliefs about the Self, and be open to experience and to understand more profound states of mind. In doing so we will keep in mind that Xenophanes, Parmenides' teacher, remarked that "It is the whole that sees, the whole that thinks, the whole that hears,"¹² and it does so without leaving a trace of itself to obscure pure vision.

Afterthoughts on Plato and Dreams

The inclusion of dream work in philosophical pursuits owed its origin to Plato's remark in his *Republic* (571B-C) that is through dreams that the soul may touch truth. He argues that in Self-reflection prior to sleep there is the need "to ponder and reach after something, to perceive something which he did not know, past or present, or future so that one may reach truth in dreams." Since the method of dream analysis utilized in these dreams follows a model of asking the same kind of questions, it can be considered a dialectic that follows the logos.

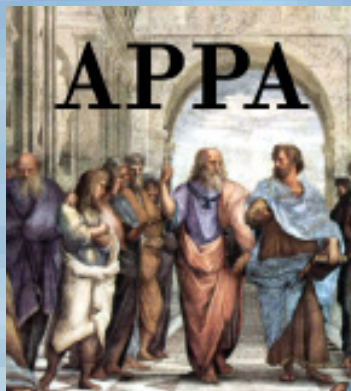
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5. The dialogue was video-taped at the APPA board meeting, June, 2013.
6. Shorey, P. trans. Plato. *Republic*, vol 1, p.193 (382A-C).
7. Plato. *Parmenides*. Second Hypothesis has nine references; Third Hypothesis 157a4; Fourth Hypothesis 157a6. The Fifth Hypothesis being a strict dualism lacks the logos.
8. Hypotheses 2, 3, 4, and 5 have their corresponding negatives as 6, 7, 8, and 9.
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Pierre Grimes, Ph.D., is the founder of the philosophical counseling movement. His mode of philosophical counseling, Philosophical Midwifery, is an adaptation of Homeric and Socratic midwifery. The name 'Philosophical Midwifery' comes from Plato's *Theaetetus*. He is founder and President of the Noetic Society, for the study of dialogue and the dialectic. When the Noetic Society was incorporated in 1978, he became the Director of its Philosophical Midwifery Program. Pierre has authored numerous video-lectures and publications, and has given presentations both nationally and internationally. In 1983 Pierre was given the name Hui-An and sealed as the Dharma Successor to Chong-An (who was later given the name Myo-Bong) of the Chogye Buddhist order of Korea. Myo-Bong is the Patriarchal Dharma Successor of Venerable Hye-Am, the 33rd patriarch from Lin Chi. Pierre is on the Board of Directors of the APPA.

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Aims and Scope

Philosophical Practice is a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the growing field of applied philosophy. The journal covers substantive issues in the areas of client counseling, group facilitation, and organizational consulting. It provides a forum for discussing professional, ethical, legal, sociological, and political aspects of philosophical practice, as well as juxtapositions of philosophical practice with other professions. Articles may address theories or methodologies of philosophical practice; present or critique case-studies; assess developmental frameworks or research programs; and offer commentary on previous publications. The journal also has an active book review and correspondence section.

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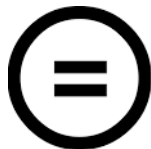
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